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The Soul of Christian Civilization

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*Address delivered by the Apostolic Delegate to the United States
at the opening session of the twenty-fourth annual meeting
of the National Conference of Catholic Charities in
Richmond, Va., October 9, 1938.*

THE inspiration and life of Catholic Charities is the precept of love, that commandment which Jesus Christ promulgated as the new commandment and which He chose to call His own: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." As love is the essential characteristic of the followers of Christ, so organized love in the Catholic Charities appears a noble and providential characteristic of the Dioceses of this great nation.

Christian charity occupies the most beautiful pages in the history of the Church. From the very dawn of Christianity Saint Ignatius of Antioch attributed to

the Church "The Queenship of Love" for her great and magnificent works of charity. It is sufficient, for that matter, to glance at our churches, whether in the cities or in the country. In their shadow have arisen schools, orphanages, hospitals, and asylums of every sort for the needy. These are the work of a faithful people animated by the Charity of Christ. There is verified in them the saying of Saint Augustine that "The House of God"—by which we mean our parishes—"The House of God is founded on faith, is built on hope, and is crowned with Charity."

Yes, only where charity is active is there the true echo of the teaching of Jesus Christ, His doctrine, His peace, His precepts. "He that doth good is of God." This is the distinguishing characteristic of Christian civilization; and it is at the same time both a supreme bond of union with God and the substance of every relationship with our neighbor.

THOSE WHO REJECT CHARITY

Alas, there are those in our days who attempt to suppress "Divine Love," and to substitute in its place a pseudo-ideal of equality, which acknowledges no difference between matter and spirit nor between body and soul. These men deny the immortality of the soul and the future life; and they desire a humanity without God. It is the viewpoint of atheistic Communism, for which human society is nothing else but a manifestation or form of matter, which does not recognize human personality nor the authority of parents, and which reduces children to the status of property of the State, to be used for its own materialistic ends.

With what a perverted sense of brotherhood and of justice such systems are animated we can see from the results which already appear in such horrible abundance. "By their fruits you shall know them." With the sense of moral responsibility taken from the heart of man, with charity spent in the individual, in

the family, and amongst nations, with everything reduced to a crude and perverse materialism, to impose any kind of discipline at all and have it be obeyed, there remains only the weapon of terrorism, and not even that is able to halt the dissolution of society. This is the characteristic of atheism, as Charity is of Christianity. The carnage of Spain is an example. "Every vestige of the Christian religion was eradicated, even though intimately linked with the rarest monuments of art and science. . . . Masses are slain almost daily for no other offense than the fact that they are good Christians or at least opposed to atheistic Communism."

It is more than manifest that such as these have nothing to do with Him who has preached love and true brotherhood. It is more than manifest that such an ideology is at an opposite pole from that characteristic by which "All men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another."

HOW MANY ARE DECEIVED

And yet, notwithstanding all this, many even of the well-intentioned are deceived; and the suicidal poison is spread abroad to claim more and more victims every day. The way is prepared for it because in the tremendous social changes through which the world is passing there are many who are suffering and many whose just rights are denied at least in part. In fact all humanity may be said to be in search for ways and means in which to better its conditions.

Moreover, Communistic propaganda is skillful. In countries where faith is strong and culture is well established, Communists parade as friends of philanthropy and peace. They say they are not concerned about religion and that they respect liberty of conscience. To use again the words of Pope Pius XI, they even "invite Catholics to collaborate with them in the realm of so-called humanitarianism and charity, and

at times even make proposals that are in perfect harmony with the Christian spirit and the doctrine of the Church." These are their tactics; but the truth is, and they have declared it and repeat it incessantly, that Communism is by its nature anti-religious.

OUR CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Reason and the eternal word of God have proclaimed, traced out, and fostered the highest principles of justice, equity, and love, in which alone humanity can hope. Humanity is not a mass of blind forces, but it has the light of understanding, the flame of love, aspirations and aims beyond the narrow limits of earthly things. The Church calls upon us to manifest the distinguishing trait of followers of Christ, charity or love; and this characteristic can never be replaced. The Church above all sets forth the duty of Religion because man has not a body alone but a spiritual and immortal soul as well. The Church vindicates the right to life and to the things necessary for existence. She demands for mankind other natural rights; liberty rightly understood, the ability to found and maintain a family, the power to educate one's children, and respect for the holy bond on which the family is founded.

Christianity has always affirmed the real and universal brotherhood of men of every condition and color. Christian brotherhood is firmly grounded only when it rests on both justice and charity. All embracing as charity is, it cannot be a substitute for justice. Pope Pius XI asserts that it is not "the task of charity to make amends for the open violation of justice" and "charity cannot take the place of justice unfairly withheld." Specifically the worker has a right in justice to a wage that will enable him to support himself and his family according to his station, and it would be a perversion of charity to attempt to substitute almsgiving for the payment of just wages.

Catholic teaching goes beyond merely enumerating the fundamental rights of justice. It prescribes how they are to be protected. It points to the richly organized social life prevailing during the Ages of Faith, to the medieval guilds which, inspired by Christian brotherhood, united masters, journeymen, and the whole community in the closest bonds of harmony to the common good of all. Applying this principle of association to our problems today, Pius XI affirms that the worker's right to organize is a natural right.

The Holy Father envisages an occupationally organized society, motivated by the justice and charity of Jesus Christ, operating through the freely chosen representatives of those making up the occupations, with the assistance and guidance of government, to establish justice and common good.

THE PAPAL ENCYCLICALS

These principles, briefly reviewed here, and ever taught by the Church, were collected, arranged, and applied to the needs and spirit of our times in the memorable Encyclical Letters: *On the Condition of Labor*, *On Reconstructing the Social Order*, *On Christian Marriage*, *On Christian Education of Youth* and others. Encyclicals, as you know, are letters of the Father of Christianity directed to all the Bishops of the world for the instruction of their faithful. Would that every individual, rich or poor, could have them at hand and understand them! Or, at least, would that there were more persons to explain them and apply them to the rights and duties of all. The Holy Father has recommended this task especially to pastors of souls and to those who take part in Catholic Action; and he has urged that working people and the poor be especially assisted because exposed as they are to the plotting of agitators they need help the more. This is a duty which enters again into the domain of charity. "By this shall all men know that you are My

disciples, if you have love one for another." If this love—a social not less than a religious duty—is not rooted in God, if it is not inspired by God as a part of the love which we owe to Him, it is reduced to very little in practice and too often to nothing at all.

CHARITY AND JUSTICE

The social confusion of today, sometimes considered as economic and sometimes as merely political, is in reality both; but above all it is moral—in the widest meaning of that word. There can be no solid morality without religion. Religion is an essential part of human life. It enables man to understand that his life is only a pilgrimage and leads him to the practice of virtue in general and to the exercises of justice in particular. Now, the basis of justice is the observance of the ten commandments of God, which in their ultimate analysis are reduced to the twofold precept of charity, love of God and love of neighbor. This is the characteristic of the true Christian, his distinguishing mark in public as in private life, his special trait in labor and in industry as in prayer.

Those have a wrong idea of charity who think that it means almsgiving alone. Almsgiving is a partial aspect of charity, but not its principal one. Christian charity has that breadth which Jesus Christ explained. It extends so far that the soul carries charity along from this earth into eternity. "Charity never falleth away." Charity is broad: to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves, to procure for others the selfsame good we desire for our own, not to do unto others what we would not want done unto ourselves, to seek fulness of justice for one and all. Charity does not exclude anyone even as the true faith does not permit the exclusion of a single point of doctrine. Just as a man who denies a single dogmatic truth cannot be said to possess the true faith, so a person who makes exclusions of any kind in charity, even

against a single one of his brethren, cannot be said to possess real charity.

OUR CATHOLIC CHARITIES

The Catholic Charities of the United States of America are a genuine expression of Charity: inspired, patient, benign, generous, humble, disinterested, and ready for sacrifice, as Saint Paul described this virtue with such strong expressions in the first letter to the Corinthians. The Catholic Charities take care indeed of the needy, whom the Church loves to call "The Suffering Members of Christ." But they are interested also in the social order, and strive toward its reconstitution according to the high principles of justice. They are interested in the problems of socially just wages, of social insurance, of child labor and education, and of the prevention and relief of unemployment. In fact every effort is made to extend the beneficent influence of Catholic Charities as broadly as possible. The Catholic Charities of our Dioceses are aided in their providential program by the beneficial activities of many religious Orders of men and women. This work in turn is reinforced by the volunteer efforts of all those who take part in Catholic Action. All these activities keep in mind that besides material benefits for the body there are needs of the spirit which cannot be suppressed and which must be provided for as well. And the spiritual benefits, far superior to benefits for the body, the Catholic Charities strive to procure and to provide with generous abundance and ardent zeal.

THE FIELDS OF CHARITY

Charity includes within itself all the virtues, perfects them, enriches them. It is charity to promote the Christian education of youth; and to accomplish this purpose Catholics at great sacrifices to themselves erect and maintain parochial schools, colleges, and

institutes of higher learning. It is a great individual and social manifestation of Charity, which merits the applause, aid, and gratitude of all, and which should be facilitated in every manner possible.

It is charity to strengthen the young in virtue, to keep them together in rightful recreation, and to help them prepare for the future. In this way their lives are kept undefiled, the way is prepared for holy matrimony, and the homes and families they will form will become veritable sanctuaries.

It is charity to strive that the people should not be victimized by false moral and social principles; and many efforts are made in this direction. Decency is sought in amusements, such as moving pictures and theatrical performances. A press free from contamination is fostered and favored. The more this danger of an evil press increases—and it is on the increase as we see from so many immoral and salacious magazines—so much the more does charity urge us to find remedies and make repairs.

HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE

The Catholic Charities are ever active. Every year, every month, and every day they do all that is possible to diminish moral and material misery, to contribute to the reestablishment of social order, to give to all, the poor and the rich, a Christian outlook on life. This is the most beautiful gift which can be bestowed because without such vision we lose direction in the pilgrimage of life. For all the words were pronounced in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice." And likewise to all were the words directed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

The world can never succeed in freeing itself entirely from misery, pain, and tribulation; but if we shall follow charity and have it present in our actions, we shall produce the fruits of justice. And only for

those who have loved justice, only for those who have practiced the virtue of charity will the final words be spoken of the Supreme Judge: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom . . . as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."

A New English Translation of the Bible

WILLIAM H. MCCLELLAN, S.J.

Reprinted from the Catholic Review, October 14, 1938.

EVEN with full divine authority in her commission from Christ, the Church is not an arbitrary teacher. She never forgets that her doctrine is not her own, but that of Him who sent her. Not for a moment does she overlook the two great sources from which her faith and morals are continually drawn. Tradition, the living word of Christ through His Apostles, lies nearest at hand, summed up in our catechism. But besides apostolic tradition there is the written Word of God, the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible, too, is a treasury of divine revelation. As such the Church has received and used it. As such she wishes all her members to know it and to profit by it.

LANGUAGE IS EVER CHANGING

Hence the activity of Catholics in every age and nation, an activity sponsored by popes and prelates, in giving to the laity the Bible in their own language. Hence the long list of translations into modern tongues, made by Catholics for Catholics, and published with the approval of our bishops, who stand in the Apostles' place.

But no translation can live long while language itself is ever changing. In Shakespeare's day men spoke of rising early enough to "prevent" the rising of the sun, that is, to anticipate or be ahead of it. Today, when "prevent" means only to "hinder," the phrase would sound foolish. Changes less striking than this one are very common. Documents only a century old require interpretation. Words fall out of use and are replaced by others. Even many expressions that are not yet quite lost may be too old-fashioned for their meaning to be quickly and readily grasped.

This was why a great missionary bishop, Dr. Challoner, felt that in 1750 a new English Bible was needed to replace the fine old version of Rheims and Douay, issued at the end of the sixteenth century. And this is why Challoner's own version, the source of most of our present editions, now needs to be replaced in turn. Its language is nearly two centuries old.

TRUTH IN MORE FAMILIAR TERMS

The worshiper at Mass, listening to the Epistle and the Gospel in Challoner's English, has not quite all that the Church desires for him. The choice of a word, the turn of a phrase, would express those imperishable thoughts more aptly. The Divine Word would then speak to us with no less truth and dignity, but in more familiar terms, and therefore with fuller force. Still more would private study and devotional reading of the Bible be thus promoted.

This need of a fresh translation has been felt so long that the present movement to meet it was only natural. When the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine began its national apostolate of religious knowledge, its leaders among our hierarchy were sure to think of making Holy Scripture better known and understood. That was a Catholic instinct. The chairman of the Episcopal Committee, the Most Rev. Edwin V. O'Hara, Bishop of Great Falls, had set his hand

almost three years ago to the great achievement of thoroughly revising the New Testament in English for Catholic use.

REVISION COMMITTEE FORMED

No such task would be lightly undertaken. Under Bishop O'Hara's personal supervision, then and always the support and inspiration of his assistants, a Revision Committee was formed on January 18, 1936. Its members were priests of experience in biblical science. Its declared aim was twofold: I. To prepare an English text of the New Testament from the Vulgate, clarified with notes, for the intelligent and profitable use of the laity, and especially for the Scripture Study Clubs under the direction of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Although the purpose of the work is popular, it is hoped to produce a text based on thorough scholarship. II. To prepare a one-volume commentary on the entire New Testament to serve as a companion volume, supplementing the notes included in the edition of the text. This also is expected to be within the grasp of the laity and yet scholarly.

TWENTY SCHOLARS TRANSLATE

How has this aim been pursued? There are "revisors" and "editors." The twenty-seven books of the New Testament are assigned to about twenty scholars for translation. Each of these revisors, with the Latin Vulgate (the Church's authorized version) as his source, and with the Greek original and our English versions at hand for comparison, translates his portion into modern English of a simple but dignified type, adding footnotes to explain the chief obscurities. He then writes a fuller commentary, to be published in a second volume. His manuscripts next go to two separate boards of editors, who carefully examine them and return them to the revisor with suggestions for improvement. The revisor finishes his work with these

criticisms to guide him, and turns it in. Two theological censors pass judgment on it. Finally it is submitted to the Episcopal Committee for their approval before publication.

All this cautious labor, on the part of men of sound orthodoxy and learning, ensures the best results attainable to human effort. But it consumes much time. The logical center of operation is the Catholic University. In its affiliated seminaries are stationed the higher officials of the committee. Some of the editors also are in or near Washington. But the revisors are scattered from Boston to Denver, and all are full-time workers in biblical scholarship. Yet this extra work has been promptly done as well as diligently. The writer of this notice and one other member were added to the committee as editors in April, 1937, and found the work already far advanced. Now all is in the editors' hands except a small part of the commentaries. A new English version of the New Testament will soon be at the disposal of all.

But there is printing and printing. The outward form of the new Bible must be worthy of its sacred contents, and serviceable to readers both clerical and lay. Hence a specimen has been prepared for the criticism as a wider circle of opinion.

The two small volumes now in private circulation, "printed, not published," are in the best fashion of the Press of Saint Anthony's Guild, and that is good indeed. They are the work of the Rev. W. L. Newton, S.S.D., late of the diocesan seminary of Cleveland and now of the faculty of the Catholic University. Fully competent though all his acquaintances know him to be for this important service to the Church, Dr. Newton sincerely desires intelligent criticism from any qualified source. Opinions are sought chiefly on arrangement of matter, choice of type, and other such features of practical usefulness. Only when fuller judgment has been obtained and weighed, will all the

books of the New Testament be collected and finally published.

SECULAR PRESS GOES OFF

The printing of the two small specimen volumes (one of translation, the other of commentary) on the Gospel of Saint John, was bound to attract attention in the secular press. Some of its comments were amusing enough. One rollicking headliner informed the world that "Catholics Change the Bible." Even so the great author of the Vulgate, Saint Jerome himself, laboring in Rome under the very eyes of Pope Damascus, was charged, so he tells, with "changing the Word of God." It is long since the year 383, but history can repeat itself. Other press notices were fairer in spirit, yet not too well informed. Comment on the quality of "changes" is still premature, since any of the changes may yet be changed.

But one change is to stay. Instead of indenting every verse, the text will be arranged in paragraphs, like modern composition, with the verse numbers in the margin. This will make it much easier to follow the sense of the inspired writer.

EXAMPLE IS GIVEN

By way of example, here is the proposed version of the Gospel for the second Sunday after Epiphany (John ii, 1-11). Note the arrangement of paragraphs and quotations:

"And on the third day there was a marriage at Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now Jesus also and his disciples were invited to the marriage. And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'What would you have me do, woman? My hour is not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he will say to you.'

"Now six stone water-jars were set there, after

the Jewish manner of purification, each holding two or three measures. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the water-jars with water.' And they filled them to the brim. And Jesus said to them, 'Draw now, and take to the chief steward.' And they brought it to him.

"When, however, the chief steward had tasted the water made wine—and he knew not whence it was, but the servants who had drawn the water knew—the chief steward called the bridegroom, and said to him, 'Every man at first serves the good wine, and when they have drunk freely, then that which is poorer. But thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

"This first of his signs Jesus worked at Cana of Galilee; and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him."

TO REVISE OLD TESTAMENT

This is an average example of the nature and extent of the changes proposed in our current editions. Probably the finished publication will be very much like this. When complete, its use will depend upon the approbation of each bishop for his own diocese. Already a committee is being formed to revise the Old Testament on similar lines. How soon the new English Bible may become the common standard for American Catholics, no one can say. But one thing is reasonably sure. The combined thought and labor of so many learned and conscientious translators may be relied upon to give us a new English Bible more helpful than the one we now use, and in no way inferior to it as a true and reliable version of Holy Scripture.

The Catholic Mind

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